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ABSTRACT

Six challenges which are felt to be facing the Extension Service, both for the 1970s and the remainder of this century, are presented. They are: (1) assessment of priorities, (2) effective program development, (3) program balance, (4) staff development, (5) maintaining effective relationships, and (6) faith and commitment. It is felt that those issues having the greatest bearing on the fate of the country and upon the Extension Service center around the crises of the time and the real dangers are found in the social environment; that is (1) in the sickness of our cities; (2) the alienation of youth, minorities, poor, and disadvantaged; (3) the inequitable distribution of society's power, privilege, rewards, and benefits; (4) educational system failures; and (5) rural area crises. It is concluded that the Extension Service cannot stand aloof, morally neutral, and socially passive and ignore these issues; the Service must take part in seeking new knowledge, strategies, and methods in dealing with the problems of people. (JS)

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EXTENSION IN THE NATIONAL SETTING IN THE 70'S

The topic -- Extension in the National Setting in the 70's -- suggests that we focus not on the past, and briefly on the present, because we really have no control over the past anyway. We are all aware that past successes tend to linger in our memory long beyond their productive lives. Therefore, we must set our sights on tomorrow's opportunities, not on yesterday's successes. We must recognize that man still has some alternatives. He can envision and select, within reasonable limits, the kind of future he desires.

There is an ancient truth which goes far back into man's prehistory. Although credit for this bit of wisdom is given to Alexander Pope, its origin apparently lies much farther back in pre-Homeric Greece. This age-old adage, which sums up a truth that mankind has almost always carried along with him, is: "Know thyself." To know thyself, one must obtain knowledge -- often through hard experience -- necessary to accommodate himself effectively and satisfyingly to the world about him -- to know what he is, what he wants to be, what he could be, and by what principles and values he wants to live.

While this wisdom was developed for the individual human being, living in a relatively static world, I believe it holds with even greater force for groups, institutions, organizations, and agencies engulfed in social, economic, and technological change. I doubt that

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we in Extension can adequately foresee the changes which time will be bringing. Therefore, we cannot yet visualize the adjustments, the accommodations, and the alternative courses of action which the Extension Service will have to make if it is to effectively function in the 70's and in the closing years of this century.

Our Nation, just five years away from the two hundredth anniversary of its revolution for freedom and human equality, set forth its beliefs, values, and principles by which it would live. I am sure the major task for all of us will continue to be to honor in practice what we proclaim in principle.

Nothing of consequence is ever divorced from its setting of time and place. Extension education is no exception. Its appraisal and its future must be made against the backdrop of the current national scene. How our Nation allocates its resources, and to what issues it chooses to direct the people's will, reveal what our Nation values most, what it cherishes, and what it hopes to be. The issues, concerns, needs, and problems are many -- including the issues of priority ordering -- but some can be singled out as having significant bearing upon educational institutions in general and upon the future of informal, or extension education in particular. Some of these issues are:

-- Imbalance between social and technological innovations, or the dichotomy of scientific development, versus social relation and human development.

-- Poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.

-- Balanced growth

a) Urban vs rural

b) Agricultural vs industrial.

-- Equitable distribution of power, privilege, and opportunity -- democratization.

-- Economic and financial posture.

-- Quality of the environment.

Equal to or greater in importance than these issues and concerns are the far-reaching turmoil, agitation, and disturbance in the basic fabric of our society. I am sure we all agree that the issues of the physical environment (which our technology has created) is out of deep concern and deserve all the attention they are now receiving. But are these the real issues that will have the greatest bearing on the fate of our Nation and upon the Extension Service?

To me, the issues center around the crises of our time and the real dangers are found in our social environment -- in the sickness of our cities; in the alienation of youth, minorities, poor, and disadvantaged; in the inequitable distribution of power, privilege, rewards, and benefits of society; in the failures of our educational system; and in the crises of rural areas.

I do not mean to imply that we should not cleanse our air and purify our streams, lakes, and rivers. While we must, of necessity, utilize our knowledge to solve problems of our physical environment, we are required also to seek new knowledge, strategies, and methods to

deal with problems of people. Hence, Extension cannot stand aloof, morally neutral and socially passive, and ignore the great issues, concerns, and problems of our society. The option is clear: WE ARE EITHER THE ACTORS, OR THE ACTED UPON.

Against this background of circumstances, then, what are the challenges we face in the 70's?

Challenge I: Assessment of Priorities

Any assessment of priorities for the Extension Service must be made in full consideration of national societal needs, issues, concerns, and problems and the mission of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities. In addition, serious consideration must be given to an analysis and identification of the changing social climate and the new and emerging power structure. I believe that if Extension is to rationally and creatively prepare itself for the years ahead, it must first know itself. It must understand the kind of organization it is today, the kind of organization it can become, the kind of an organization it wants to become.

More importantly, whatever Extension does, how ever it changes in the 70's, it must face up to the changes it seeks to make and move boldly into the parade of change. This means that Extension must be willing to be one of the principal architects and a major engineer of societal change -- social, economic, and technological.

Cooperative Extension is 57 years old, and that is not an old age when we compare it with our own age. Yet, when stated another way -- "more than a half century" -- it sounds like a long time. Our

"track record" is a good one, with high public credibility, competent professional resources, and unlimited opportunities.

But today the Extension Service is seeking to identify the new opportunities, to conceptualize and operationalize creative innovations and reorder priorities in keeping with shifts in the idea and relevance of informal education. The paradox is the success of Cooperative Extension in helping to develop an agricultural production system which is capable of producing several times our domestic needs; and how less than successful it appears to be in developing technology, methods, and strategies to attack new social and economic problems with similar scientific problem-solving approaches used in solving technological problems.

I think we must determine the extent to which there is imbalance between human and social development and technological inventions. If we are to deal more effectively with major problems, needs, and concerns of people, our values and priorities must be reassessed in terms of the total societal picture. Options and choices must be identified and predictions made of the consequences.

Challenge II: Effective Program Development

One of the most difficult, but important, components of Extension is that of making decisions regarding the program. Over the years, much discussion has been centered on program development processes. The emphasis is as important today as it ever was. However, much more emphasis is needed in operationalizing the concepts into practical

programs of action that are in balance with needs of people. The potential of program development for helping solve problems of rural and urban life is tremendous. But to realize this potential we must understand and appreciate above all that the challenge lies in transforming program development concepts into relevant and realistic program opportunities and problem-solving situations for the various audiences of Cooperative Extension. We may need to do more to design programs to meet the needs of people with limited resources as well as those of people with adequate resources, such as commercial farmers and other affluent families. The nature and sophistication of our educational methodologies and strategies require adequate plans of action to meet the needs of people in the various program categories.

I think our program development processes in general have been good; but they have been much less than what is desired. Why is this true? Because we fail to take adequately into account representatives from society who are not now in the mainstream of Extension's program thrust. It seems reasonable enough to develop programs, determine program balance, and measure results against obvious needs and problems as viewed by professionals and affluent local leaders. It is eminently sensible, however, to have both the affluent leaders and representatives of the disadvantaged, alienated, and minority groups consider problems, needs, and priorities around which programs are developed.

Effective program development never takes place in a vacuum. The on-going functions of the organization must be sustained while the program development processes move forward.

I shall not dwell on the steps in the process for I am sure you understand them. It is important that our objectives and goals, if they are to be meaningfully achieved, must be developed within a framework of commonly-accepted values, principles, and processes. It is through such processes which help make the objectives, goals, and principles come alive.

Challenge III: Program Balance

We hear much discussion about the need for program balance, or "a need to work with and assist all segments of society in those areas for which we have or can acquire competence, should provide assistance, and have the legal and moral obligation to help." Are our programs in balance? How can we recognize whether or not our programs are in balance? Our observations about it may be superficial and naive unless we know what to look for and can identify what we see.

It seems to me that program balance is a three-dimensional concept:

(1) Representative involvement of people;

(2) Flexibility of emphasis on and between various program categories; and

(3) Assistance to clientele and potential clientele based upon need as well as demand.

Do our programs reflect needs, problems, concerns, opportunities, and priorities of people from all segments of society?

Is there balance between and among the various program areas as determined by priority needs and concerns?

If the answer is no, then why not?

If the answer is yes, who determined program priorities and what criteria or standards are used to determine quality and quantity of program balance?

Do we serve the affluent middle class and "traditional" clientele who demand our educational service; or should we serve those who have the greatest need?

These are difficult and important questions, and they must be answered satisfactorily.

According to Administrator Kirby, "One policy is crystal clear to me. As an educational institution and as public employees paid from taxpayers' money, we have an obligation to serve all segments of society within the framework of our responsibilities; and all segments of society must be represented in determining what is the appropriate balance in our educational assistance." ... The degree to which we have representative people involved in this process will help to determine the nature of balance in our programs."

We often refer to our times as the "age of technology," or the "age of scientific development." I urge that we consider the "age of human relations and development." I do not agree that "we the people" means the privileged few representing the many; but rather, the masses, each of whom has dignity and who is seeking to assert his "rights" and voice his demands. There is clear indication that the cultural lag gap is continuing to become wider and wider.

Cooperative Extension has been and continues to be a major factor in developing an agricultural production enterprise that challenges man's imagination and at the same time has helped create a quality of life for middle- and upper-class rural Americans that is equal to levels of living of similar groups in urban areas.

I have no illusions about the past or present efforts of Cooperative Extension. These efforts and emphases must continue both in the areas of agricultural production and in quality of living. But what about the future? Much of Extension's future depends on its ability to export the revolution beyond its traditional base in agriculture and home economics, held by middle- and upper-class rural Americans, to the lower socio-economic groups in rural and urban America. In addition, Extension of necessity, must focus more sharply on the problems of drug use and abuse among teenage youth, rural development, hunger and malnutrition, and family pathology, whether in rural or urban areas.

Extension must seek that balance which can be achieved only when we have the integrity to resist the distortions created by easy and opportunistic accommodations to the strongest pressures and forces of the moment. These forces do not conflict simply because they are close to each other; they conflict when they overlap and compete. We must seek a balance in which each program area, each segment of society, each function, each objective, and each goal of Extension move forward together, strengthening and supporting each other in their progress.

This is the essence of program balance in Cooperative Extension, and it must be a total institutional commitment.

Challenge IV: Staff Development

The scope, role, and function of Extension in the 70's suggest that it provide a cadre of human resources -- professional, para-professional, and volunteers -- necessary to meet the people's problems within the appropriate range of its objectives and goals. The complexity of the problems and needs of people indicates the competency of staff in dealing with the problems.

The teaching-learning process in informal education requires abilities in relating relevant results of research to problems of people. Extension in the 70's must have competencies in the physical, biological, and behavioral sciences. For we are surely in a period when we will be trying out new methods, new strategies, and new approaches and deciding whether they are realistic and usable; suggesting how they might be modified, augmented, and strengthened.

H. G. Wells said that " ... human history is increasingly a race between education and catastrophy." Those words seemed at the time to be quite far out and wild, but they have since been proved accurate. Educational media today embraces the most exotic, complex, and seemingly endless array of electronic miracles. But technology cannot by itself solve a problem in education, but it can provide a means by which a problem may be solved. It is the subject-matter content and the "therapy" that is ultimately important.

We are confronted, it seems to me, by two broad problems. The first is how best to apply specific communications technology to specific systems and how to develop teaching-learning situations that provide for

quality instruction in which interest of clientele is maintained. The second problem is how, in a social environment where the classroom is ultimately connected to the outside world through the pervasive presence of the media, to manage educational technology in the best interest of society.

Answers to these questions call for imagination and creativity and for us to recognize the opportunities and turn them into realities. I believe the time is right for a whole new burst of serendipity experiences for extension workers. The years ahead will be a time for testing whether we have the will and creative capacity for such leadership.

Challenge V: Maintaining Effective Relationships

The Cooperative Extension Service was established on the concept of cooperative, joint partnership -- federal, state, and local. This cooperative arrangement has proven to be eminently successful and has contributed to the responsiveness of the Extension Service to national concerns, as well as to local needs and conditions.

Industrialization and urbanization of American life, and the many problems it has generated, has caused a great proliferation of extension-type organizations and programs, both in the universities and in the private sector. Only a few years ago, Cooperative Extension was practically alone on the scene. The potential in this proliferation of extension-type organizations for jurisdictional battles and organizational conflicts is great.

The potential in the concept of extension education, with a meaningful relationship to the land-grant university, for solving urgent problems of rural and urban life is tremendous. The real challenge to the realization of this potential for solving social and economic problems lies not in agriculture and home economics alone, but also in solving problems of rural and urban America which lie beyond these subject matter areas. I do not mean to suggest, or even imply, that we do not have a very real responsibility for problem-solving in agriculture and family living. Consideration is and must continue to "be given to maintaining our primary responsibility of helping assure a strong, viable, agricultural industry which will benefit both the producer and the consumer."

As we analyze our problems and reorder our priorities based on changing needs of our present and potential audiences, I am sure we will find that competencies needed for problem-solving go beyond the usual resources available in colleges of agriculture and home economics. In many cases, the resource needs will go even beyond the land-grant university to other institutions of higher learning and the private industrial sector. Community colleges and trade or vocational schools might be considered excellent sources of expertise to help meet urgent needs of a larger community.

According to the Joint Committee report, A People and a Spirit:

> The colleges of agriculture, or, for that matter, any other single college, do not contain all of the disciplines needed to support field programming of the Cooperative Extension Service. The administrative arrangements within the university should not only permit but facilitate and encourage the channeling of all relevant university disciplines to the Cooperative Extension Service.

My point is that we in Extension must increasingly seek out those resources, wherever they may be found, and mobilize them for action. This is part of the blending and averaging tendencies of our time, and Extension can enrich the broader community into which it goes.

Challenge VI: Faith and Commitment

Finally, the challenge we face in the 70's centers around the depth of our conviction in the need for a viable and definitive Extension Service. There are many kinds of futures, as there are many kinds of persons -- the negative future, in which things will not happen. There is the so-called "realistic" future where we see things as they are, but rarely as they ought to be. In this case, no change takes place; and nothing happens. As Andre Gide expressed so well:

"What another could have done as well as you,
do not do it.
What another could have said as well as you,
do not say it.
What another could have written as well,
do not write it.
Be faithful to that which exists no where but in yourself,
and thus make yourself indispensable."

Then, there is the future to which we are called today to provide professional leadership and "ideal" hope. This is the future in which our highest powers and competencies can come to their best expressions and be more than equal to the problems of the present and future.

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